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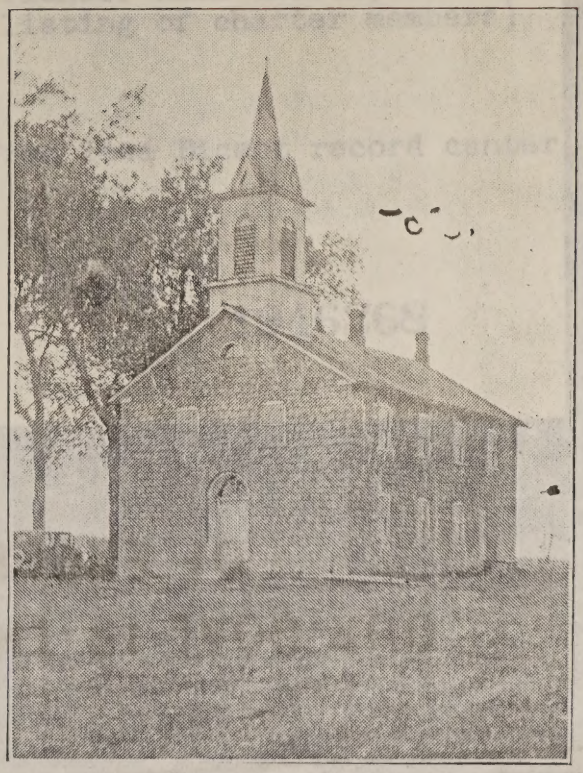
The "Pioneer Rock Church"

Ceres, Iowa



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Niemann, Louis (Mrs)
His Pioneer Rock Church, Ceres,
Iowa (listing of charter members)

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Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.—Deut. 32.7.

Life of Rev. Paul Stockfeld

As told by Mrs. Louis Niemann, Historian

Rev. Paul Stockfeld, Founder and Builder of Ceres Congregation

REV. Paul Stockfeld was a native of Holland. This writer has no records regarding the time of his birth or death. Those who knew him judged him to have been about middle age at the time he built the Lutheran Church at Ceres in 1858. His wife was of Irish descent. To this union were born five sons, namely: James, Richard, Ben, William and Paul, also two daughters, Amanda and Julia.

Julia spent a great deal of her time in taking care of Mrs. Murdock, who was old and feeble. She resided near Garnavillo. On a cold wintry night the house set on fire. Julia carried Mrs. Murdock aside to safety on a bed which she also had carried out of the fire. Mrs. Murdock, suddenly thinking of her bible in the flames, rushed in after it in spite of Julia's pleas not to. Julia seeing the great danger ahead and unable to battle the flames alone ran to the neighbors for help, freezing both feet. Upon their return the house and Mrs. Murdock were no more. Julia

heavenly palace leaving behind a great span of years in which lay his many and great accomplished deeds. His memory is held in high esteem by all who knew him. Two of his children survive him today—Dr. James Stockfeld of Fremont, Nebraska, and Mrs. Amanda Rocke of Lincoln, Nebraska.

The Last Living Charter Member of The Church, Age 79 Years, Nov. 16, 1927

The Last Living Members of the Old Church, Mr. and Mrs. G. H. W. Niemann, of Guttenberg, Iowa

later met her death accidentally through a kerosene fire in Nebraska, where she later resided.

Dr. Paul Stockfeld, as he is also called, was a highly educated man being master of seven languages, while his father knew eleven. He came to Garnavillo from St. Louis. He taught school in District No. 6 driving daily with horse and buggy from Garnavillo, a distance of five miles.

Dr. Stockfeld had between sixty and seventy pupils coming as far as from Monona and Postville. He was most severe in keeping order. If pupils failed in their studies they were told horns would soon grow on them and they would become oxen. This proved a very effective saying.

Shortly before school would close, one of the oldest boys would get his horse ready, so he could be on the way at the earliest time to visit his patients as he also was a doctor. No doubt, he was one of the greatest doctors at the time. Where other doctors failed, he succeeded. He visited the sick and needy day and night with or without compensation, then preached a sermon on Sundays without any preparatory study that would make tears come to the eyes of the listeners. Let it be known also that he finished his study for the ministry in five months.

Truly, Dr. Stockfeld was a great man—probably the greatest at his time in this locality, for his equal has not been seen before or since.

Some of his pupils are living yet. They are Mr. Gerhard Niemann, John and Henry Hagensick, Joe Matt, Henry Schlake, Mrs. Dr. G. Blech, Mrs. Eliza Tuecke and Mrs. Henry Brandt.

In 1896 Dr. Stockfeld parted from his family and friends to his

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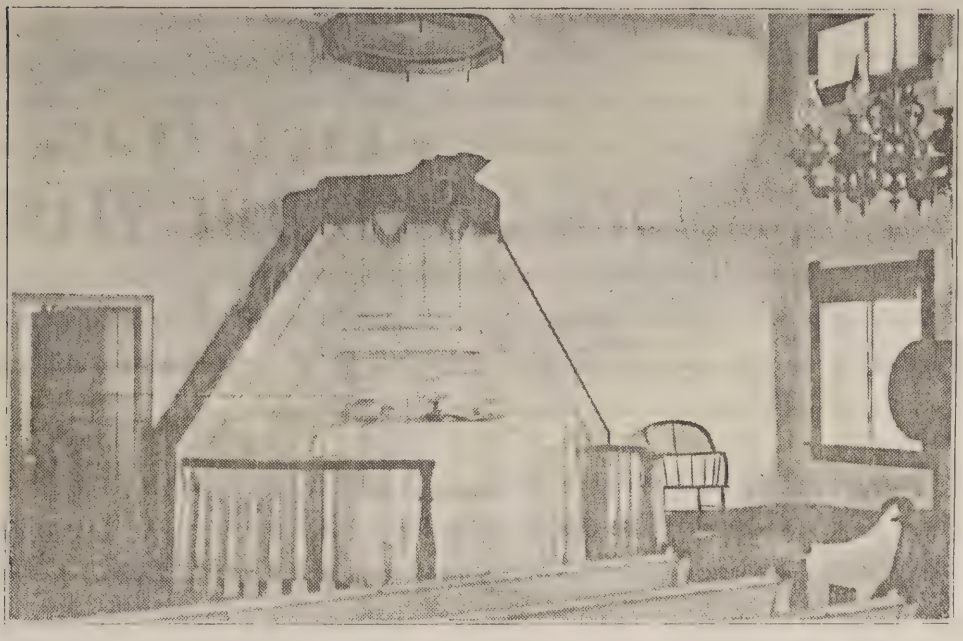
The "PIONEER ROCK CHURCH"

Historical Sketch by Mrs. Louis Niemann, Historian



Interior of the Old Church

THE "Pioneer Rock Church" at Ceres, between Guttenberg and Garnavillo on Highway No. 55, Clayton County, Iowa, was formerly known as "St. Peter's German United Evangelical Lutheran Church." Its history dates as far back as 1858, when the congregation was organized.

Up to 1858 the people of Ceres, which was formerly known as Independence, went by foot to church at Garnavillo, where Dr. Stockfeld

was pastor. Finally these people, being strong enough in number, decided to build a church at Independence and organize for themselves with Rev. Stockfeld as their pastor.

Since Dr. Stockfeld proved himself so efficient in his professions, he was asked to take the lead in building St. Peter's church. The first members included the following: G. H. Bierbaum, Chris. Bierbaum, Casper, Henry and Carl Backhaus, H. Wiegman, J. H. Abker and Gerhard Walke. These men, with Rev. Stockfeld, held a special meeting in February, 1858, at the Gerh. Bierbaum residence. Rev. Stockfeld became secretary and J. H. Abker, president. At this meeting the members vowed it their solemn intention to organize for themselves and discontinue all relations with the Garnavillo church; immediate preparations for the new church were discussed, also the site of the church. The historical records bear witness to the great hardships and scarcity of money that had to be met by these sturdy people; but all pledged help to the extreme so within two years the church was completed.

The land of the church was purchased from Eli Carlan for the consideration of $30.00 an acre, amounting to five and one-sixth acres. Eli Carlan living on what later became the Fred Weiman property. Here can be mentioned an experience Mr. Carlan had. As soon as he had the above mentioned sum, he was accosted by a robber on a dark night. The robber knocked at the door, and when asked what he wanted, threatened to get in. Upon being denied admission he took an axe and attempted to force his way in. Seeing no way out of it, Mr. Carlan's help fired through the door and this ended the struggle for riches, for the robber, who was a total stranger, began his sleep of death.

Later another acre of ground was deeded to the church by Gerh. Bierbaum; the acreage now totaling six and one-sixth acres.

All members helped in getting the rock for the church (and this took many a load) from the Gerh. Bierbaum rock quarry. The ground on which the church was built was free from trees but the rest, including the cemetery lot had to be grubbed. This cemetery Mr. G. H. W. Niemann helped break up and grub with oxen at the tender age of eleven years. The cellar was dug and the new church started. All expenses of foundation and church walls were paid after a year's time, to make certain that the work was substantial. Christ Bierbaum unloaded the first load of lime with a shingle, forgetting his shovel in town.

In the fall—Ocotober 25, 1858—the cornerstone was laid. In the stone a hole was carved so as to contain a round bottle with a glass stopper. In this bottle was placed the "Constitution" of the church as written by Rev. Stockfeld. The contents of this bottle have been removed, no doubt, by curious tourists.

The church, as built, is 44 feet long by 30 feet wide. It came to less than $1,100 for which subscriptions were taken up. Twelve feet of the length were taken up by the residence of the pastor; aside of which the old school house was built. There is now one large room downstairs used for the preservation of relics.

The same year of 1858 Sebastian Walsh submitted the cheapest bid for digging a well. His offer as accepted was $1.00 a foot until rock appeared, then $1.15 a foot. All necessary tools and powder were to be furnished by church members. This well is about 35 feet deep and 5 feet in diameter and is all cemented. It has good drinking water. A pump is used now but at that time the water could only be drawn with a pail and rope.

Various meetings were held to decide the style of pulpit and seats

wanted. Finally, Mr. Prior of Guttenberg designed the altar for $68.00 and the benches were made by Casper, Henry and Carl Backhaus for $2.50 a piece, following the style of benches used in the Guttenberg Lutheran church.

The altar and benches are painted white with walnut wood color trimming. Deep red plush adorned the altar and pulpit. There are two rows of windows above and below on either side affording plenty of light. Kerosene lamps with reflectors were installed along the white walls.

In 1868 Rev. Stockfeld, after twelve years of hard work without compensation gave up his duties here and went to Michigan. The Rev. Israel, Stark, Hincken and Ziemer occupied the pulpit.

It was through the efforts of Rev. Ziemer in 1889 that a tower for $300.00 was placed on the church by Louis Schroeder. In the same year an exceptionally sweet toned bell was installed for $111.00, which could not be purchased now at three times that price. The memory of its tones is cherished by many for whose dead it pealed.

In 1874 a church organ was purchased for $102.00. This organ was played by Mrs. Dr. G. Blech (nee Louise Weiman) till a new one was purchased in 1890. She played twenty-seven years without pay for all occasions, traveling five miles with horse and buggy. She resigned later when leaving for Dubuque, Miss Amanda Kregel taking her place.

Special credit is given here to Rev. Gerhard Bunge of Garnavillo. The above mentioned organ was abandoned as worn out as repairs were beyond the knowledge of repairers. Yet in 1927 we were so fortunate in having with us Rev. Bunge, whose mechanical talent and ability has changed this organ into, one might say, a new one on which soon after "Lohengrin's Wedding March" had to

Showing What Used to Be the Old Hagensick Corner or Ceres Corner

View of Cemetery Near "Pioneer Rock Church"

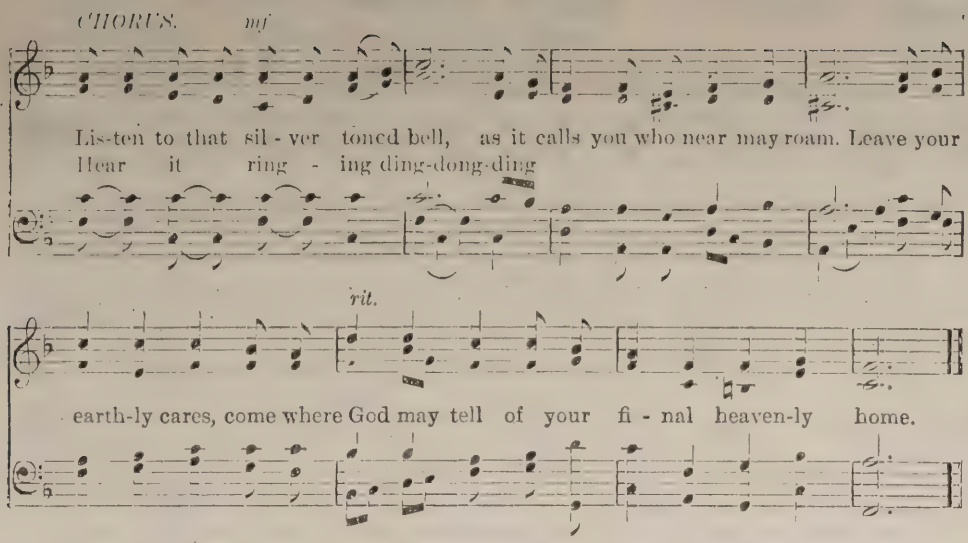
be played. Lack of this knowledge in 1910 caused the expense of a new organ.

In 1894 Rev. Gamelin came but held church every two weeks only. During his stay in 1896 the name "Independence" was changed to "Ceres."

Rev. J. Bunge was the last resident pastor. Through his efforts a new floor replaced the old rough boards. He stayed from 1901 to 1907. Rev. Mall and Bosholm later resided in Garnavillo.

The charter membership gradually diminished in membership so that today (1927) the only living charter members are Mr. and Mrs. G. H. W. Niemann. Mr. Niemann was a faithful secretary for the last thirty-eight years.

Scene Along the Mississippi River and Guttenberg Park



HOW THE SONG WAS COMPOSED

As told by Mrs. Louis Niemann, Historian

Rev. Gerhard Bunge, Composer of Words and Music for the Church Song

THIS song, as given above has already won great popular favor even though the time it was written is only a few weeks ago. It was composed in words and music by Rev. Gerhard Bunge, of Garnavillo.

Rev. Bunge is gifted with a wonderful musical talent as shown by the music as well as the words. Quite a while ago Rev. Bunge was inspired by the loniness of the church with such beautiful surroundings and wonderful location. He then wrote these words and later the music thinking this would stir the minds of those interested in the church, to make it again a religious gathering place.

The Song of "The Pioneer Rock Church" at Ceres, Iowa

Copyright, Words and Music 1927 by Gerhard Bunge.

Words and Music by Gerhard Bunge.

p

1. Midst Io-wa's woods and corn - fields the Pio - neer Rock Church stands,
2. Year af - ter year has van - ished and man - y have passed on
3. Oh keep those walls from fall - ing and let that bell still peal.

A land-mark built by sett - lers that came from far - off lands.
Since pio-neers built these church walls and heard that bell's first tone.
They tell you of old - fashioned folks who there in prayer did kneel.

They built homes cleared the coun - try; they toiled for what is ours.
But staunch and strong these walls stand; they brave the storms fierce might.
But to us of this modern age that old bell still would say,

rit.

But for their faith, a - bove all things they reared that church's tower.
And sweet - ly yet that bell does peal; its tones our hearts de - light.
"Pre - pare, pre - pare to meet the Lord in faith on judge-ment day!

The First Charter Members

Gerhard Bierbaum.
C. Backhaus.
H. Wiegman.
John H. Abker.
H. H. Schmidt.
Wm. Pohle.
E. L. Baumer.
C. H. Backhaus.
I. F. Nieman.
Chris Bierbaum.
W. Buchholz.
W. Greiman.
Carl Backhaus.
Gerh. Walke.
Fred Tuecke.
Theo. Miller
Ludwig Miller.
Rudolph Schroeder.
John Bonker.
F. Schroeder.
John Pohlman
Mrs. Krueger.
H. H. Niemann.
Henry Kattleman.
John Walke.
J. Henry Stevens.
John H. Wehrkamp.
Joseph Schlake.
E. M. Hagensick.
Chris. Severin.
Gerh. Stork.
Chas. Stork.
Henry Wehler.
John Knoren.
Joe Wehrkamp.
Henry Danenbring.
Peter Backes.
Adolph Kregel.
Adam Overbeck.
C. Marquarrd.
Henry C. Will.
Wm. Steinkopf.
Wm. Brunn.
Wm. Overbeck.
Louis Krueger.
Henry Wunsch.
Conrad Schutte.
E. Menke.
Henry Ohlendorf.
Andrew Fritsche.
Jacob Splies.
Jacob Brucker.
Clamor Wilke.
Peter H. Overmueller.
John Broker.
Chris Wirkler.
John Speiser.
H. V. Beal.
Fred Haering.
Henry Nieland.
George Jacobs.
D. A. Meyer.
Philip Wunsch.
Jacob Buck.
Herman Walke.
Fred Krueger.
Henry Kuhlman.
John Schmidt.

PIONEER ROCK CHURCH *and* CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

THIS association was formed in the fall of 1927 for the purpose of restoring the old rock church and to beautify the cemetery grounds and the grounds around the church. Its aim is also to preserve the church as a memorial to those who have built it especially Dr. Stockfeld, and have now gone to the Great Beyond. This association has made it a beautiful community church open to any creed subject to the approval of the president of the association.

Following are its officers:

President—Mr. Edward Tuecke, Guttenberg, Iowa.

Vice President—Mr. Vic Hyde, Guttenberg, Iowa.

Secretary-Treasurer—Mr. Alfred Pufahl, Guttenberg, Iowa.

Board of Directors:—
Mr. Louis Niemann, Guttenberg, Iowa.
Mr. Herman Kregel, Guttenberg, Iowa.
Mr. John Rhodas, Guttenberg, Iowa.

Historian—Mrs. Louis Niemann, Guttenberg, Iowa.

Pamphlets may be secured from any of those mentioned above at 25 cents a copy

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